

Flowback refers to process fluids from the wellbore that return to the surface and are collected after hydraulic fracturing is completed. In addition to the hydraulic fracturing fluids originally pumped, returned fluids contain volatile hydrocarbons from the formation. After separation, flowback fluids are typically stored temporarily in tanks or surface impoundments (lined pits, ponds) at the well site. Liquid hydrocarbons from the separation process are routed to production tanks. Workers periodically gauge the fluid levels in flowback and production tanks with hand-held gauges (sticks and tapes) through access hatches located on the top of the tank.

Figure 1. Flowback tanks



Figure 2. Production tanks



*These photographs are representative of a flowback operation and are not indicative of the sites where any of the fatalities occurred.